WHIRRAKEE

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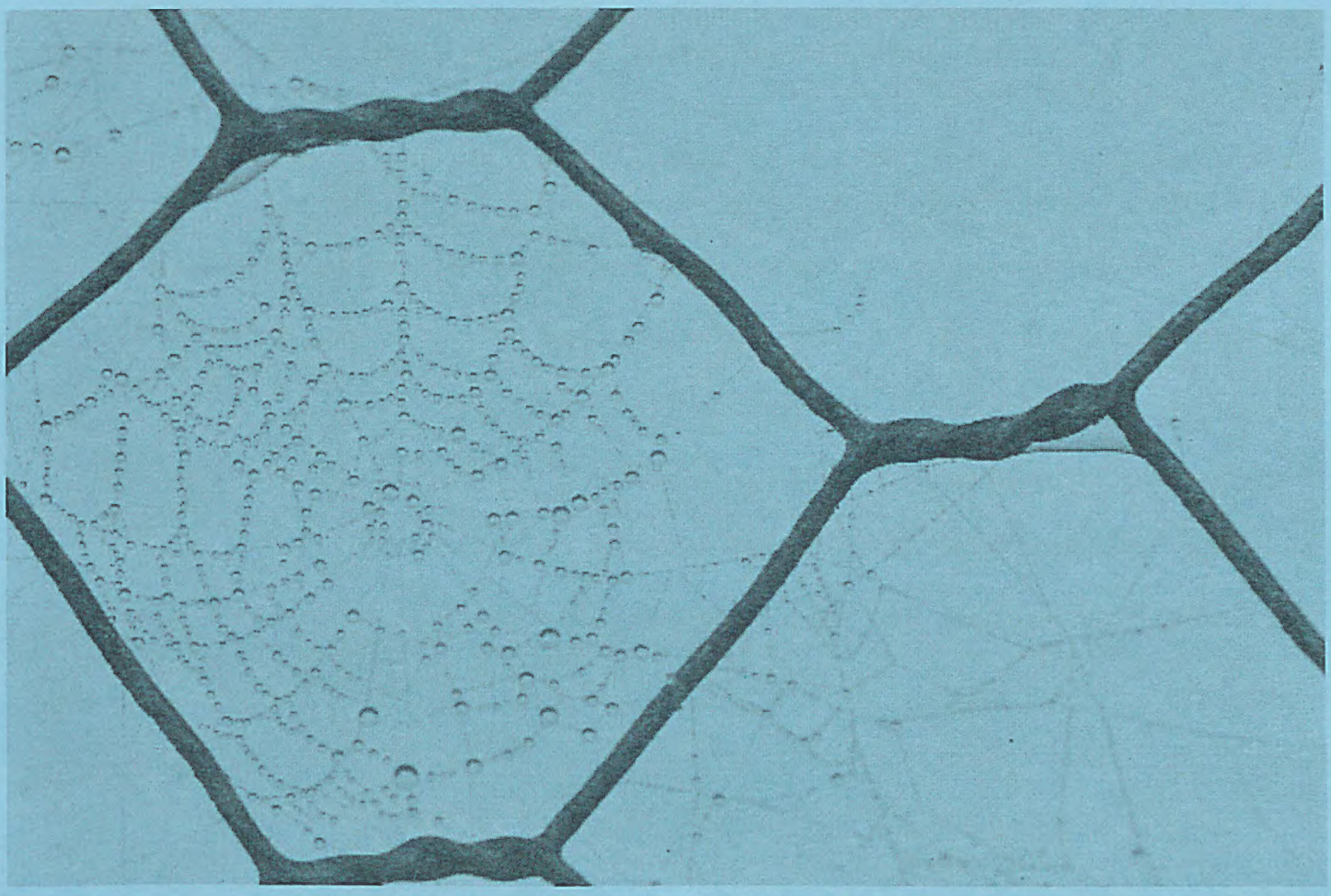

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2010 - 2011

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer	0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*	
Secretary	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Minute Secretary	Joy Clusker/Rod Orr	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier (an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth, Bev Culvenor, John Lindner, Kerrie Norris.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets occasionally (by prior arrangement) in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 32, No. 6, July 2011

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
Back to the blue covers again; one thing that has remained the same for many years. However, many other things around us seem to be changing. This year appears really different, not only with respect to flowering times, but also what animals are observed around Bendigo. There have been unusual sightings of birds (e.g. quails in the suburbs and black cockatoos) and the Golden and Cootamundra Wattles are already coming out in places – at the beginning of winter. In the observation, you can read that a koala has been seen in Kamarooka. Once again, I can't wait to see what happens next. Rod Orr says that the Whirrakee Wattle is in bud and promises to have a spectacular flowering display later in July and early August. It will be interesting to see if its normally very reliable flowering time is also affected. Bent-leaf Wattle (Acacia flexifolia) is in full bloom now. Enjoy.

Front page photographer: Sigrid Wilkens
Spiders are continuing to leave their mark on the landscape. This miniature web was photographed in the Flinders Ranges at Easter time.

Short Notices

Special Request to all members

Those members who have an e-mail address, can you please let us have this address for future contact with you - the reason for this request from the Committee is that in the future, we may be able to send issues of the *Whirrakee* electronically to those members who would prefer this option.

An effective way of letting us know your email address is to send Jan Orr an email at: Jan.Orr@westnet.com.au to let us know if you would like to try this method of receiving the *Whirrakee*. Otherwise, you could talk to a member of the Committee to express your opinion on this proposal.

Atlas of Living Australia: data collection

The CSIRO is looking for data for any living species in Australia to add to the Atlas of Living Australia website. Images are also welcome. All contributions are acknowledged and contributors retain ownership of any data or images that they share. Interested people can contact:

Briony Cowper, Data Liaison, Atlas of Living Australia CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences
GPO Box 1700
Canberra ACT 2601
Email: briony.cowper@csiro.au
Web: http://www.ala.org.au/

Editor's note: The website looks interesting. I recommend you check it out anyway.

Family Nature Club - Geology - 'Hidden wonders of the White Hills' (Sunday July 17, 10am - 12 noon)

The focus will be on aspects of local Bendigo Geology, interesting rocks and landforms, and some geological history of parts of Bendigo.

It will be conducted at White Hills - our meeting place is on the roadside opposite Keech Castings in Powell Street (the extension of Murphy Street, which forms a T-intersection with Napier Street opposite Weeroona College). We will need to park along Powell Street and then walk into the area of the White Hills that we will study.

It can be a busy road at times, so everyone must be careful to avoid any danger from car traffic. Children will need to be closely supervised at all times. Also, please wear sturdy footwear to manage the rough, uneven ground and come suitably dressed for cold & possibly damp weather. There will be many things to write down for those interested as well as good opportunities for photography for people who want to bring their cameras.

Eric Wilkinson, who worked as the Government Geologist for many years in Bendigo, will show us some of the hidden wonders of White Hills.

As usual, we welcome assistance from as many Field Naturalists as possible. Everyone who comes to help also seems to enjoy the experience and to appreciate the enthusiasm of the children and their parents.

Lines for Birds

Barry Hill and John Wolseley

The poet and the artist discuss their work and collaboration. Bendigo (Goldfields) Library 29th July, 5.30 – 6.30pm. Free, but booking essential. Ring the Library on 54492700.

The amazing work of spiders

Author and photographer: Dale Little

Like most, Peter and I have had our share of Golden Orb Weavers in our garden over the past few months. When one on our fence line disappeared a few weeks ago we wondered where it had gone. Yesterday, while trimming the climbing fig that grows along our fence line, Peter noticed this Golden Orb tucked deep within the foliage. It was at an awkward angle to reach – top of the wall, inside the next property, but I think my photograph (next page) gives an idea of what it looked like. I was about the size of a small hen's egg.

An egg cocoon of a Golden Orb Weaver – what an amazing construction. Photographer: Dale Little

Some old favorites as well as new finds – Images from the June Fungal Excursion
Pictured below are Rod Orr, Pam Sheean, Anthony Sheean, Anne Bridley, Hennie Spence and Matthew Comer. The two others participants were Jan Orr (the photographer) and Alan Spence. Who ever said that looking for fungi is a dank and dark business?

The fertile tissue of the underside of the cap of *Phelodon niger* the Spine Fungus (photo by Rod Orr).
The magnified image on the right is from near the black stem.

Also photographed by Rod Orr, *Mycena interrupta* one of my personal favorites (Pixies' Parasols) ➔

Calostoma fuscum
Pretty Mouth Puffball
The cap falls off the puffball when the spores are mature - they escape from the star-shaped opening (the pretty mouth) ➔

Leotia lubrica Stalked jelly Fungus

June Family Nature Club – 'Little Rotters' Photographer: Joy Clusker

Some participants came dressed weatherproof AND pretty →

Dermocybe splendida

Macrolepiota procera ↑

Cortinarius sinapicolor ↓

Small and easily overlooked ...

The Striped Greenhoods (*Pterostylis robusta*) are flowering beautifully at the moment in the Kamarooka and should continue for some weeks until the frosts get them. The area is in very good condition, still showing the benefits of good rainfall at the right time, before the growing season.

(Photographer: Rod Orr)

Red-tipped greenhood, *Speculantha* sp. aff. *parviflora* (formerly *Pterostylis* sp. aff. *parviflora*), photographed by Glenise Moors on 19/4 at Stuart Mill. The flowers are small and don't stay open very long once fertilised. The plant was about 9 inches tall with little triangle-shaped leaves hugging the stem in places.

Jan & Rod visited Mt Alexander a couple of months ago and saw this beautiful little moth resting on a buttercup leaf. It has an almost unforgettable common name - Metallic Moth. These little moths are widespread, but also easily overlooked because they are so small (less than 2 cm long), unless the light reflects off their scales. They belong to the genus *Pollanisus* (*viridipulverulenta*?). The larvae probably feed on *Hibbertia*.

Report of June fungal excursion
by Rod Orr

We had eight intrepid BFNC members who attended the Fungus excursion on the Saturday of the recent long weekend. Even though we were all rugged up and waterproof, the day was mostly fine and sunny and we even had some sunlight managing to penetrate through to most places in the forest where we were searching for fungi. We needed to use long exposures though, or a camera's flash unit to take photographs of the fungi we found, because the available light was still at very low levels.

Although our visit was a few weeks later than last year's, we still visited the same locations to compare what we found. Conditions were not as wet this year and many of the larger, more spectacular fungi that we had found last year were nowhere to be seen. We found other species that were still very interesting although smaller and usually less colourful. Jan's moss, lichen & fungus-covered tree was not as spectacular this year because large slabs of bark had fallen from the trunk together with much of their cover of hangers-on, which probably had been growing there for many years... Other trees, however, did have a developing 'stocking' of moss and lichen, promising to become more interesting to revisit during the next few years.

Strangely, we failed completely to find any of the Boletes, which were growing in most areas that we visited last year. There might be more to the 'fungus season' than simply expecting the same monthly succession of different fungi as last year's - perhaps some species take much longer than a year to regrow.

Other species, which were found in only a couple of places last year, were much more common and widespread this year - for example, *Mycena interrupta*, Pixies' Parasols, (see page 5) and *Sphaerobolus stellatus*, the Cannonball Fungus, were found growing on several stumps and logs in areas where we didn't see them last year.

The Pretty-mouth Puffball Fungus *Calostoma fuscum*, (see page 5) was still in the same place though - 3 old stems remained from last year with one example of this year's new growth nearby.

One fungus which most of our small group had never seen before was the Stalked Jelly-fungus, *Leotia lubrica* (see page 5). There were also several interesting Coral Fungi growing amongst the leaf litter and a few Bracket Fungi growing on logs and stumps. We also found many more Jelly Fungi during this year's visit, some species growing on branches and others on the damp soil.

Many of the logs and stumps were very damp and slimy suggesting that the Slime Mould season is reaching its more colourful stage when they begin to develop their fruiting bodies.

The last interesting fungus that we found was the Spine Fungus, *Phelodon niger,* which produces its spores on tiny, soft spines - quite a contrast to the fungi with gills with which we are more familiar (see page 5). You only notice this difference if you use a mirror to inspect the underside of the cap, or if you uproot one of these fungi - the spines are visible without magnification but you can certainly see them better with a hand-lens or when projected larger than life-size onto a screen.

Some June Observations

Peter Little 28 April 2011
Buff-banded Rail seen in open space off Barnard St

Ken Goodman 21 June 2011
Black-tailed Native Hen at Epsom. This bird had spent a couple of hours wandering around Ken's front lawn when he rang Anne Bridely to report it.

Peter Allan saw a koala off Campbell Road by a large old distillery dam where he regular-

ly does Atlas Surveys. One would not think that even tall mallee is a natural habitat for koalas. It was in a tree, possibly a Kamarooka eucalypt in an area of mixed mallee. The dam is on the south side of Campbell Road, west from the main bitumen road through the forest. There was regrettably a very large pool across the road just off the bitumen and he had to go via Millwood Road and then head back east along Campbell Rd.
Does anybody know if koalas have been reported in that area before?

Hullaballoo in Central Bendigo (and other observations)

From Dale Little

On Monday morning (27 June), as I was hanging out the washing – around 9:15, I heard a ruckus coming from the street behind us. A flock of birds then flew across our yard from the east – 9 crows, 3 blue-faced honeyeaters, 2 peewees and 3 galahs. The noise was deafening. I looked up; expecting to see the sparrowhawk that sometimes moves through the area, but it wasn't in sight.

The birds landed on the next door neighbour's television aerial and continued their cacophony of sound. The phrases "a murder of crows" and "cry bloody murder" went through my mind as I searched for the cause of the ruckus. As my neighbour, who had now come out to see what was happening, and I chatted, a barn owl flew down the driveway and landed awkwardly in the bare branches of the golden ash on our fence line. It hung upside down for several minutes, before regaining its equilibrium and flew off towards the west. The noisy group of birds followed. The whole show was over in about 10 minutes and quiet returned to the neighbourhood.
My husband, an avid bird-watcher, said it was the first time he had seen a barn owl in central Bendigo.

Further bird sightings on Monday were a pair of white-naped honeyeaters in Rosalind Park and a flock of between twenty and thirty yellow-tailed black cockatoos. The black cockatoos were sighted as I drove past Scope and then again as I parked my car at St John of God Hospital at about 3:00 pm.

June General Meeting – Dr Pam Whiteley: Wildlife Health Surveillance Victoria

Pam works in the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Melbourne University and has been active in many important institutions including Healsville, and also had a stint with the Fishery and Wildlife Service in the US. At present she works out of Geelong and Werribee (back with Melbourne Uni) along with Professor Ian Beveridge (parasitology), Ass. Prof Andrew Vizard (Epidemiology) and Dr Joanne Devlin (Virology).

Conducting research on wildlife health is not only important for conservation, but also because wildlife (and their diseases) interact with domestic animals and humans and vice versa. Examples of well-known interactions are avian influenza, toxoplasmosis as well as diseases human can contract from handling bats.

Pam and the above-mentioned team have the ambitious goal of determining a wildlife health base line, i.e. a background study on the normal health state of free-ranging wildlife. From this, they will be able to detect changes and emerging trends and identify risk factors.

In this context, Pam is interested in all sick and recently dead wildlife, but only if the animals have been free-ranging. The team receive carcassses from all over Victoria and try to determine causes of death. Many times a 'simple' road kill can also reveal diseases and parasites not known or recorded until then. In this endeavor, Pam cooperates with many community groups, landholders, field naturalists, vets, Parks and Wildlife as well as DSE staff and interested members of the public. Bird health, for example, can theoretically be affected by them relying heavily on sewage treatment plants for their habitat in drought times, while other animals can be influenced by chemical and

biological contamination near human dwellings and industrial sites. However, a certain level of disease is normal in any population and it would be good to know what the level is. If you come across a sick animal, Pam is asking us to make notes on its appearance and behaviour.

Some wildlife diseases are quite well studied, like urinary tract infections and subsequent cysts in koalas (caused by *Chlamydia*), beak diseases in parrots (Circovirus), frog decline (chytrid fungus) tapeworm and mange diseases in wombats (caused by mites) and kangaroo blindness (virus). Feral wildlife is also an important link between domestic and free-ranging native animals. Foxes may spread mange, for example. In addition, many microorganisms in polluted waterways can cause disease in reptiles, fish and water fowl.

It appears that Pam is interested in victims of them all. So if you see a dead animal, you may care to get it to Werribee, where it will be used to learn more about wildlife diseases.
Ring 0400119301 or e-mail Pam Whiteley on pamw@unimelb.edu.au, to check if suitable, and how best to package the carcass. Note the time, date, location and the condition, and any other observation that could be helpful.

This was an exceptionally interesting talk. The explicit images of diseased, dead and dissected animals might not have been everybody's idea of an after-dinner presentation, but there were so many questions at the end and nobody had to rush out suddenly during the talk, looking green. I believe the audience was so utterly fascinated, they easily got over the gory aspects of it. We were very grateful for Pam to have come all that way on a cold and wet night.

Volunteer opportunities – identifying the cause of decline of the eastern quoll.

The eastern quoll is extinct on the mainland, and now survives only in Tasmania. Until recently, the Tasmanian population was thought to be stable and secure, however statewide spotlighting and trapping surveys have indicated declines of more than 50% over the past 10 years. Research is currently underway to try and identify the cause(s) of this recent decline. Volunteers are required to assist in a variety of field activities including live capture and release of eastern quolls at 4 Tasmanian study sites, as well as collection of a range of biological samples, demographic and morphometric data. Volunteers would need to commit to a minimum of 4 days, however commitments of 8 or 16 days would be preferred. Field work is undertaken every 2nd month, with the next session commencing mid-July. For more information, please contact Bronwyn Fancourt at the University of Tasmania on Bronwyn.Fancourt@utas.edu.au

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BFNC Speaker program for July till November

Coordinated by Ben Goonan

July 13th
Dr. Jason Goodger, School of Botany, University of Melbourne and Ms. Allison Heskes PhD candidate, School of Botany, University of Melbourne, 'Botanical imaging in the 21st century: using lasers to unravel the mysteries of essential oil glands in eucalypts'

August 10th
Emeritus Professor Sam Lake, School of Biological Sciences, University of Melbourne.
'The ecology of stream restoration'

September 14th
Associate Professor Raoul Mulder, Department of Zoology, University of Melbourne
'The My Swan project'

October 12
Carolyn Hall, 'A Touch Of Ice - Spitsbergen & Greenland 2010'.

November 9th
Jeff Jeanes, National Herbarium of Victoria
'The Victorian Conservation Seedbank Project'

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, July 13 7.30pm
A joint presentation by Dr Jason Goodger and Ms Allison Heskes (PhD candidate), both from the School of Botany, University of Melbourne: 'Botanical imaging in the 21st century: using lasers to unravel the mysteries of essential oil glands in eucalypts'.

Bendigo Family Nature Club
The Bendigo Sustainability Group, BDEC and BFNC are combining their approach to this. Several sessions have been conducted successfully. All activities are held on the 3rd Sunday of the month. The theme for July is 'geology' and Eric Wilkinson will lead the activities at a site in White Hills (see page 3). Many hands are needed on the day, so if you can help out, please contact Jan Orr.

'Naturally Loddon' A Wonderland in Spring Festival 1 September to 2 October
In its second year, the 'Naturally Loddon' festival aims to pull together new and existing key events to promote our beautiful environment and to highlight the biodiversity, natural assets and cultural heritage of the Loddon Shire.
The festival is aimed at all age groups with a variety of fun, interactive and educational events – all showcasing the great Loddon outdoors.
To view all events go to the Loddon Shire web site www.loddon.vic.gov.au and scroll down to the bottom of the home page and click on the "Naturally Loddon" logo.

The Bendigo *Towards Reconciliation* group, is planning an excursion to Boort on the 3rd or 4th of September. Please contact Diana Collier on 5443 0137, if you a e interested in joining.

Bendigo Native Plant Group are holding a **Native Plant Flower Show** on Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September
Time 9am - 5pm both days
At Rotary Hall, Gateway Park, High Street, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo

For more information contact President Ian Evans Phone 5446-7326
Email ianevanslandscapes@bigpoond.com.au

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

12th Annual Project Platypus
throughout July 2011
Come and be part of an enthusiastic and productive team. Help other volunteers to plant and guard plants in the Ararat area. Camping available. Jobs for all abilities.
For details contact: 5358 4410
admin@platypus.org.au Online Registration: http://www.platypus.org.au/plantout-registration.php

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National Tree Day Sunday 31 July 2011

Planet Ark is calling on all Green Thumbs to register and run a National Tree Day Site in 2011. National Tree Day and Schools Tree Day combine to make Australia's biggest community tree-planting event. Co-ordinated by Planet Ark, these are special days for all Australians to help out by planting and caring for native trees and shrubs to improve the environment in which they live. Since 1996 more than 2 million volunteers have planted over 15 million native trees and shrubs! It's a day to get down and get your hands dirty to help the planet! Information and Registration: http://treeday.planetark.org/